

# THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES OF THE WAR

*This bulletin is published for readers at home and abroad by the Religions Division of the Ministry of Information, London, to elucidate the spiritual issues at stake in the war, and to provide information concerning the British Churches in wartime, as well as their contribution to post-war reconstruction.*

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## BRITISH SOLDIER IN HOLLAND SEES FOR HIMSELF

The following letter from Pte. L. G. White, R.A.M.C., serving with the British Liberation Army, appeared in a recent number of the Southwell Diocesan Magazine. It will be of particular interest to readers of *Spiritual Issues* to which a reference is made under the slightly inaccurate title of "Spiritual Forces."

Dear Mr. Editor,

You may remember that I had the great honour of representing our Diocese at the World Conference of Christian Youth at Amsterdam in 1939. Well, here I am, back in Holland again, after sharing in the seasickness of D-Day, the trial of strength in Normandy, and that great run through to Antwerp.

It was while attending a parade Service held at a little Dutch Reformed Church that I met the local Dutch Minister, discovering to my surprise that he was at Amsterdam at the time of the Conference, and was one of the great crowd that watched our parade of national delegations at the Stadium. He spoke excellent English, and I had the joy of several subsequent meetings with him.

It is impossible to relate all we discussed in those happy evenings, where I felt again that indescribable spirit of unity which so characterized the Amsterdam Conference.

We spoke of the four years of enemy occupation and I found that the reports we had read in such bulletins as "Spiritual Forces," about Nazi persecution of the Church in Holland, were not exaggerated. The Minister's predecessor had ended his days in a concentration camp, and he himself lived under the

threat of a nocturnal visit of the Gestapo. Hence he, like so many others, had his hiding place, which I saw. It was most ingenious. Many of the clergy never dared to sleep in their own houses. Paid men sat in their Churches to report the services to their German masters.

The joy which the clergy in particular feel in their deliverance—though their joy cannot be full until all Holland is free—is well expressed by the Minister's words, "No longer need we fear the knock at the door." I told him of our constant remembrance of the Dutch Church in our prayers during the occupation, and he said that we too were remembered.

He spoke with hope of the oecumenical movement, though he had naturally heard little of its development through the war years. He had no great knowledge of our late, and sorely missed, Archbishop of Canterbury. His theological books were mainly Dutch and German, with quite a number of Barth's works, not, of course, including his letters to British and French Christians.

We have exchanged addresses and intend to correspond as soon as we can, to exchange news and views, especially of each other's Churches.

I had the joy of attending the Dutch Communion Service, taking some of my friends. To make the Service more intelligible for us, the Minister read our Collect for Purity, and our Consecration Prayer, and at the time of Communion, Our Lord's Prayer for His Church—"that they all may be one." How appropriate that seemed! To join with these people who have suffered for the Faith was

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an unforgettable experience; there, one felt, was something of that solid Rock, against which the gates of Hell—and Nazidom—cannot prevail.

But to be an unofficial ambassador, in khaki, of one's Church to the Church in Holland is a thrilling and joyous experience, and I hope to make more contacts when the situation permits. Each little contact, prayerfully used, can help to draw closer those bonds within the Church which, drawing together "men from every nation under heaven" can alone offer to the world real and lasting peace. Christus Victor!

Yours in fellowship,

L. G. WHITE.

### GRIM PICTURE FROM NORWAY

Recently the Swedish Norwegian Press Bureau gave the following account of the present position of the Church in Norway:—

"Well-informed Church circles in a general survey, report that the NS authorities are intensifying their pressure against the Church. Bishop Berggrav has now been interned at Asker for three years, and his chief guard was recently shot by the Germans. Professor Hallesby has been imprisoned for two years in Grini, while other Church leaders have been banished and dispersed all over the country. The bishops who have not been arrested have had their freedom of action more and more restricted. The leaders of the Norwegian Missionary Society are still interned in Berg concentration camp, and other members have been deported. The number of congregations deprived of their clergymen increased alarmingly in 1944. Many children are not christened; there is no longer any preparation for confirmation; and conditions in the congregations are almost chaotic. Telemark, Østerdalen and Stjørdalen are the hardest hit. Trondheim and Tromsø Cathedrals have no clergy.

"Attacks on the clergy doubled in 1944. On January 1st, 1943, about 50 clergymen had been deported and 20 arrested. On January 1st, 1944, the figures were 104 and 50 respectively. The recruiting of NS clergy has shown poor results during the year; only six have been ordained. In addition there were already 25 ordained NS clergymen, but these are now beginning to give up. In some congregations with NS clergymen only one or two services have been held in the past nine months. Two National-Socialist clergymen have written to the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs, saying that the position is intolerable and a farce.

"The Church struggle in 1944 cost much. The clergymen Boge and Thu died in prison in the prime of life. The year was perhaps the hardest during the struggle, although without spectacular events, public protests, etc., like the first year. The course then decided on, however, has been strictly adhered to by all churchmen."

### Bishop Aulen on North Norway

The Swedish paper *Eskilstuna Kuriren* of February 13th contains a vivid article by Bishop Gustaf Aulén of Straengnaes. "News reaches us from North Norway of total destruction and in recent days of the massacre *en masse* of honest Norwegian men in Oslo. In its retreat the German army has completely destroyed in the North all that has been built with incredible sacrifice during the centuries. The German soldiery has caused irreparable damage. The question which now burns in our hearts is this: Will the other Norwegian districts be ravaged by the same destruction? Will the population be 'evacuated' everywhere the Germans pass in the future? Will Gudbrandsdalen and Valdres and all those other marvellous valleys be razed? Will the Norwegian towns be converted into ruins? The danger is imminent. One must expect anything. We have justification from the massacres of these last days. There is no guarantee that all this will not continue, or even become worse. The occupying Power and its treacherous collaborators have long ago abandoned all scruples and all feelings that we call human. The political course which they are following is nothing else but total cruelty. The despair which seems more and more to affect Nazi circles only makes the danger worse. Germany is on the threshold of its collapse and this collapse will be terrible. Humanity has never witnessed things like those which are happening now since the unforgettable time of the downfall of the great Roman Empire. Those who are leading Germany to its doom have only one purpose, to try to involve others in the same abyss. They have said so, openly. It is madness: but where there is despair, reason is not heard. The diabolical force which has been let loose everywhere appears, 'full of wrath, because it knows that the time remaining to it is short.' Now we have a responsibility. What can we do? What ought we to do? I do not wish to spend any time over those who have no other reply except 'Am I my brother's keeper?' Norway is in danger of imminent death. The time left to us is perhaps short, very short,



perhaps only a question of days. In this situation there is no hope of carrying conviction merely by diplomatic protests to the madmen to stop their burnings and murders. The efforts which have been made by the Voluntary Swedish Corps ready to help Norway as soon as possible are praiseworthy. But in the actual situation, we cannot content ourselves with what a voluntary corps could do. There is now only one thing to do: that is to place sufficient part of our excellent Swedish army on the borders of Norway in Vaermland, Jaemtland and the North of Sweden. The presence of Swedish battalions on our Western frontier can be expected to have a salutary influence on the desperadoes, and to make them see reason. Perhaps these people will pause to think before continuing their programme of North Norway in the other provinces. Perhaps, also, the band of murderers in Oslo would fail to continue their foul crimes. Let us then have a powerful Swedish force on the Norwegian frontier. That is the course which is most needed at the moment. Nothing should prevent us from following such a righteous path. Its intention would be clear for all. Sweden would show in fact that it does not wish passively and carelessly to share and assist in the spectacle of the destruction of a neighbouring brother people by a criminal band of madmen."

### THE IMPLICATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

Reference has been made in these pages to the important Conference held in America in January under the auspices of the Churches Commission on a Just and Durable Peace. The full text of an important speech made by Mr. John Foster Dulles in opening the Conference, has now arrived. The first part of the speech consisted of a strong plea for international collaboration and, in particular, for America's participation in it. Many of Mr. Dulles's points have been met by the Yalta Agreement, but there is permanent value in the speech, from which we venture to quote a considerable extract. Although Mr. Dulles was speaking as an American to American churchmen, readers in Britain and other countries will doubtless appreciate his comments on the moral implications of international collaboration. Speaking of the conditions under which international collaboration could be regained and further strengthened Mr. Dulles said . . .

"Another condition is that our co-operation be conciliatory and understanding of the

ideals and vital needs of others. We must not be dogmatic. Our particular ideals and sense of vital interest are not the only ones in the world. Also, we must recognize that, as said in the Lansing-Ishii declaration: 'territorial propinquity creates special relations between countries.' Just because we reject non-co-operation we must not go to the other extreme of assuming that all nations have an equal interest everywhere.

"Finally, we must make it clear that we will not be satisfied with getting a piece of paper in exchange for the living reality of collaboration. So long as Great Britain and the Soviet Union think that what our hearts are set on is merely a document which will satisfy us intellectually, then we will never get the real thing.

"Under the foregoing conditions, we could confidently expect to revive the arrangement for 'the closest co-operation' which was agreed to at Moscow.

"The immediate difficulty is not external, but internal. We cannot expect our Government to seek to co-operate on world problems unless that is what the American people want and unless they want it sufficiently to be tolerant of results which, in themselves, will often be unsatisfactory. We must change the standard by which we will judge our Government's performance. No administration, of whatever party, would or could do such things as are here suggested if it is going to be denounced whenever the outcome fails to satisfy wholly America's particular ideals.

"How and under what conditions will the needed tolerance be forthcoming? We do not want tolerance which is mere indifference. We do not want tolerance which reflects a conscious abandonment or lowering of ideals. We do not want tolerance which excludes the right freely to speak in aid of ideals. Collaboration must not be bought at that price.

"What, then, is this 'tolerance' of which we speak, and which alone can make collaboration a living thing? It is not a compromise of our ideals. Rather, it is the acceptance, provisionally, of practical situations which fall short of our ideals. The vital word in that sentence is the word 'provisionally.' We cannot agree to solutions which fall short of our ideals if thereby we become morally bound to sustain and perpetuate them. That would be stultifying. It is the possibility of *change* which is the bridge between idealism and the practical incidents of collaboration. That possibility is an imperative for Christians who must



constantly maintain tension with any worldly order. That is why our Commission, in its 'Curative and Creative' statement of a year ago, emphasized that international organization must not be 'designed merely to perpetuate by repression the particular structure of the world which will emerge from the war,' but that it must be 'designed to seek, from time to time, the change of treaty conditions which may prove unjust.' There must be 'potentialities for correcting mistakes.' Only under such conditions, as we then said, would the Christian forces of the country solidly support organized world collaboration. Also, only under such conditions can there be a popular attitude which will embolden government to share the responsibility for hard decisions.

"Thus, there emerge four principles of conduct needed to bring collaboration out of the realm of theory and into that of reality.

"1. Our government should adopt and publicly proclaim its long-range goals. These should stem from our Christian tradition and be such as to inspire and unify us. Without such defined goals we will lack enthusiasm and sense of direction. We will not be able to measure our progress. The Atlantic Charter was ill-conceived in many respects and has thus been an occasion for much disillusionment. But it was sound instinct which led to the production of such a statement of principles.

"2. Our government should not merely talk about its ideals. It must get down into the arena and fearlessly and skilfully battle for them. It must do so, not merely sporadically, but steadily. It must do so even under conditions such that partial and temporary defeat is inevitable.

"3. Our government must, however, battle for its ideals under conditions such that no particular set-back need be accepted as definitive. It must be made clear that collaboration implies not merely a spirit of compromise but equally a right, on the part of every nation, to persist in efforts to realize its ideals.

"4. Our electorate, demanding the foregoing of its government, must judge its government accordingly. It should not judge it merely by the immediate results attained. It must rather judge it by its announced long-term objectives, by whether it works competently to achieve them and by whether it brings into actual functioning procedures of peaceful change so that the world may evolve away from present harsh necessities. If government meets those tests, then the electorate should applaud such conduct irrespective of dissatisfaction with immediate results.

"As we meet here in conference, we shall be concerning ourselves much with long-range objectives. That is as it should be, for it is of those that we are best qualified to speak. Also we shall be concerning ourselves much with the plan of Dumbarton Oaks. That also is as it should be. The proposals are of first importance. Our government has asked us to discuss them and to do that is both our duty and our desire. Let us also, however, give thought to how world organization and our other long-range objectives can be made live realities. There is a dangerous gap between plans and resolutions on paper and their translation into actual practice. We ought to help to close that gap. The difficulties are many and partly beyond the range of our immediate influence. That makes it the more imperative that we exhaust the possibilities that are within ourselves. May it be that we can make more clear, for ourselves and for our fellows, that idealism is not irreconcilable with the practical incidents of international collaboration? Can we do something towards removing the impression abroad that the American people are primarily interested in perfecting paper plans? Can we do something to allay our government's obvious fear that it will be harshly and unfairly judged if it goes in for collaboration at the low level of actualities rather than the high level of theory? May it be that, in such ways, we can become a sufficiently greater force for good so that we can decisively tip the balance in favour of a better world?"